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Region 5 Superfund (SF)

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ASHLAND/NORTHERN STATES POWER LAKEFRONT

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U.S. EPA REGION 5
ASHLAND COUNTY
ASHLAND

Congressional District # 07

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



313790

Site Description

The Ashland/Northern States Power Company (NSP) Lakefront site is located in Ashland, Wisconsin. The site is bordered by US Highway 2 to the south, Prentice Avenue to the east, Ellis Avenue to the west, and Chequamegon Bay to the north. The properties on which contamination is located encompass approximately 12 acres and include NSP (now known as Xcel Energy), Wisconsin Central Limited Railroad corridor, the city of Ashland's old wastewater treatment plant/Kreher Park, and contaminated sediments in Chequamegon Bay, an inlet of Lake Superior.

The site area is mixed residential and recreational; Ashland's population is approximately 8,795 people. Kreher Park includes a lakefront bicycle path. Along the eastern boundary of Kreher Park is a boat ramp, a public swimming beach, and a campground. The Ashland marina is connected to the northwestern portion of Kreher Park. The filling of Chequamegon Bay after 1880 created much of the land that is the current site. Landfilling material included sawdust and other wood waste products from former lumber mills as well as various demolition and fill material, derived from a former manufactured gas plant (MGP) on Xcel Energy's current property.

Site Responsibility

This site is being addressed through federal, state, and potentially responsible party (PRP) actions.

Threats and Contaminants

The landfill and former MGP activities are likely the primary cause of site contamination. The subsurface soil, groundwater, lake sediments and surface water are contaminated by varying concentrations of complex mixtures of organic chemicals known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). When PAHs are encountered in high concentrations, they're not very soluble in water and appear as coal tars and oils which are commonly referred to as nonaqueous phase liquids or NAPLs; some of which are heavier/denser than water, DNAPL, and some of which are lighter than water, LNAPL. People aren't exposed to the contaminated soil, because the contaminated soil is covered with clean fill. Chequamegon Bay sediments pose a risk if agitated by wave action, boat anchoring, swimming, and/or wading since the coal tars and LNAPLs are released into the water column and form "slicks" on the water surface. Warning signs and buoys are posted all around the contaminated area that warn people against swimming, wading, and boating and provide instructions for washing and flushing their skin and eyes. While the groundwater at the site is contaminated, the city of Ashland residents are not exposed to it, because the municipal

water supply is instead derived from Chequamegon Bay, outside the known extent of surface water contamination. However, some people do use water from wells near the contamination zone. These wells are not yet contaminated, but could become contaminated in the future. Fish sampling in Chequamegon Bay indicates that fish do not contain levels of site-related chemicals that are a health concern. However, people should continue to follow fish consumption advisories for Lake Superior.

Cleanup Progress

Local officials notified the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) of contamination found in excavations around the former wastewater treatment plant in the late 1980s. In 1993, WDNR began investigating the contamination found on city property. These investigations concluded that at least some of the contamination came from the former MGP that operated adjacent to the city's property. In 1995, WDNR notified NSP (now known as Xcel Energy), the city of Ashland, and the Wisconsin Central Limited Railroad that they are potentially responsible parties (PRPs) for the contamination. WDNR and Xcel Energy have carried out various investigations on the properties.

In 1999, a citizen's petition requested that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assess the site and determine if it could be listed on the National Priorities List (NPL). Based on its hazard ranking score, EPA proposed listing the site in December 2000. The site was added to the NPL in September 2002. EPA signed an administrative order on consent (AOC) with Xcel Energy on November 14, 2003, to complete the investigation, called a Superfund Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS). Previous investigatory work was used to greatly streamline this effort.

The RI sampling started in April of 2005. The RI report was submitted to EPA in June 2006. The RI was finalized by EPA in October 2007. The FS was submitted to EPA in October 2007, and EPA approved the FS Report in December 2008. In addition, Xcel Energy conducted an innovative technology study at the site in the deep aquifer through the EPA SITE program. This site demo was completed in summer 2007.

Since fall 2000, Xcel Energy has been implementing an interim cleanup action which removes (pumps out) coal tar from the groundwater beneath its property, separates it from the water, and allows it to be transported offsite for proper disposal. In May 2002, Xcel Energy implemented a second interim response to eliminate a coal tar seep in Kreher Park.

In November 2008 EPA presented the site to the EPA National Remedy Review Board because, based on information in the FS Report, the estimated cost of the cleanup is expected to exceed \$25 million. When the Remedy Review Board process is complete, EPA will issue a proposed cleanup plan for public review and comment. After considering all public comments, EPA will issue a record of decision (ROD) documenting the selected cleanup plan for the site.

Contacts

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Aliases

ASHLAND FLASH NSP LAKEFRONT SITE
NORTHERN STATES POWER
ASHLAND/NSP LAKEFRONT SITE

Site Profile Information

This profile provides you with information on EPA's cleanup progress at this Superfund site.